

EARTHSAVERS

Reconditioned responses

Specialist washing products for woollens and delicates omit enzymes, bleaches and brightening agents, but many still contain petroleum-based detergents and phosphates. Lux Flakes (99p for 425g) is one of the kinder products available since its cleaning agent is pure soap, which disperses harmlessly in water.

Ecover and Faith Products are 100 per cent biodegradable and have nothing that could harm the environment or cause allergic reactions. Ecover's Wool Wash Liquid is an ultra-mild cleaner and conditioner for any delicate fabric, and has a fresh citrus scent. Suitable for machine and hand washes, with no need for a separate conditioner, 1 litre costs about £1.75. From health-food shops, Safeway and selected Sainsbury's.

Faith Products' Clear Spring Original Laundry Liquid (1 litre, £2.55) includes in its long list of 'noes', no alkalis, which makes it especially suitable for woollen and delicate clothes. From health-food shops and by mail order from Faith Products, Unit 5, Kay Street, Bury Industrial Estate, Bury, BL9 6BU.

Fabric conditioners, developed to combat static in synthetics, are not strictly necessary for natural fibres. Many contain imidazoline which has low biodegradability. Regular use of conditioners tends to increase the amount of detergent required for future washes.

However, they undoubtedly make clothes softer, so try either Ecover's imidazoline-free Fabric Conditioner with a high degree of biodegradability (1 litre, about £1.45) or Karen Christensen's suggestion in *Home Ecology* (Arlington Books, £4.95): a concoction of 1 part bicarbonate of soda, 1 part white or herbal vinegar, and 2 parts water.

SUE CARPENTER